Damage to Tobacco Crop in West Godavari District

2159. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tobacco Board has assessed the damage to the tobacco crop in West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh this year;

(b) if so, the findings of the Tobacco Board;

(c) whether the Tobacco Board has recommended any financial assistance to tobacco farmers of West Godavari; and

(d) if so, the actual assistance that has reached the farmers this year?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. Tobacco Board has estiamted that in about 12391 hectares of area, 50% or more of the tobacco crop was affected by a fungal disease viz. "Brown Spot Disease"

(c) and (d) Tobacco Board made an assessment of the damage on account of "Brown Spot Disease" and submitted an authorised grower wise list to the respective District Collectors for necessary action. Tobacco Board also made arrangements to supply pesticides to the growers on credit basis under tie-up arrangements with local pesticide distributors. No financial assistance has been extended by Tobacco Board.

Export Promotion Council for Tourism Industry

2160. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the news-item in 'the Economic Times' dated the 12th May, 1998 captioned "Export Promotion Council for Tourism Industry on Anvil" and state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government wants to extend incentive schemes to hotels to earn foreign exchange;

(b) what schemes have Government proposed to enhance foreign exchange earnings from hotels; and

(c) what are the details thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE); (a) to (c) The Government extends several incentives to hotels for encouraging them to earn foreign exchange. The Income Tax Act, 1961 Section 80 HHD allows fiscal benefits. The hotels earning foreign exchange are also allowed import of several items for their use at the project stage and at the operational stage in the form of project import as well as incentive quota. In the EXIM Policy Zero Duty EPCG Scheme has also been extended to the service sector.

The Government have also liberalised the norms for foreign equity participation in hotels as well as in the matter of obtaining technical collaboration from international agencies etc.

Imposition of Anti-Dumping Duty

2161. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI:
SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI:
SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry have rejected the plea of steel industry for imposition of anti-dumping duty on import of hot rolled coils, sheets, plates and strips from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan;

(b) if so, the reasons as well as the justifications therefor; and

(c) the total quantity of those items imported so far along with the price per tonne?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE); (a) and (b) The Designated Authority appointed under the Customs Tariff Act and the Rules made thereunder is continuing investigations into the alleged dumping of hot rolled coils, sheets, plates and strips from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The Designated Authority

has notified only the preliminary findings on 17.6.98. No provisional duties have been recommended in the absence of a casual link between dumping and injury to the domestic industry. An oral hearing is scheduled industry on 4th Aug. 1998.

(c) The designated Authority in its preliminary findings has found that the total imports of these goods were 1,91,854 MT in 1996-97 at an average CIF price of US$ 278 pmt in case of Russia, US$ 263 pmt in case of Ukraine and US$ 285 pmt in case of Kazakhstan.

Amendment in Commodity Board Act

2162. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose amendments to the Commodity Board Act;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whcher amendments are suggestive to Rubber Board Act;

(d) whether Government are aware of the proposed amendments to reduce the autonomy of the Board and Curtail the interest of rubber growers in Kerala; and

(e) if so, the reasons for the proposal to reduce the authority?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE); (a) to (e) Review of the Commodity Board Acts including the Rubber Act is an ongoing process. Amendments are made from time to time to make these Acts more streamlined development-oriented and to ensure that the services beign provied by the Commodity Boards to their respective industries and growers are optimal and are not hindered by the rules, regulations and procedures some of which might have become obsolete with the passage of time and policies of Government.

The review of Acts is not aimed at reducing the autonomy of the Boards or to curtail the interests of the Growers.

Review of India's Trade Policy

2163. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Secretariat of WTO has prepared a 224 page-long report on India's Trade Policy Review (TPR);

(b) if so, the sailent features and findings of the Report; and

(c) what is India's reaction to these findings?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The report contains no specific findings, but is a general overview of India's trade policies seen in the context of its overall economic environment. The report, in its different sections, has dealt with India's overall economic environment, our trade and investment regimes, our trade policy measures affecting imports and exports and trade policies by major sectors.

(c) The Report is a general over view of our trade policy. During the course of the Trade Policy Review Meeting, India answered queries regardings its continuing programme of trade and economic reforms. India also expressed her commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system, which should become increasingly responsive to the needs of developing countries, like India.

Profits of Tea Companies in Assam

2164. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the profits of tea companies in Assam for last three years, year-wise and investment of each company; and

(b) the percentage of profit re-invested for socio-economic development of Assam by each company?